

**Dragonshards****The Lhazaar Principalities, Part One**

By Keith Baker



The Lhazaar Principalities stretch across the eastern coast of Khorvaire. The islands northeast of the Hoarfrost Mountains are dark and cold, while the winters are long and the sun a rare visitor. These isles are the source of many sinister tales; living in the long shadow, one can easily imagine ghost ships prowling the waters and lich-lords hiding in the mountains. To the south, steaming jungles cover the Lhazaar islands; the land is home to deadly dinosaurs, and colossal sea serpents are said to lurk beneath the waves. From the frigid north to the southern tropics, these are hard lands that produce hard people.

The Lhazaar region draws its name from the Sarlonan explorer and pirate who colonized Greentarn, Orgalos, and Cape Far. Despite her fame, Lhazaar was neither the first nor last pioneer to settle along the eastern coast of Khorvaire. Over two dozen large islands are in the Principalities, and a remarkable range of people have found their way to the eastern shore. Gnome explorers from Zilargo claimed the isle of Lorghalen long before Lhazaar made her crossing. Elf refugees from the Aereni civil war found solace in the icy solitude of Farlnen. Dwarves and orcs from the Ironroot Mountains migrated to the eastern shore, laying the foundations of Tantamar and Cliffscrape. And dozens of human expeditions followed in the wake of Lhazaar, with most being Sarlonan explorers and fugitives from nations since destroyed by the Riedran Empire. The islanders have come together over the centuries, forming cosmopolitan communities and common traditions.

Despite the blend of races and cultures that have come together to form the Principalities, Lhazaar's influence can still be felt. It was Lhazaar who organized the first raider fleets, leading expeditions against Zil merchants and the ships of the dying Dhakaani Empire. Lhazaar granted her best captains the rank of praelas -- a Riedran rank translated as "prince" in the Common tongue -- proclaiming herself to be the prince among princes. She established the few laws that are universal throughout the realm, notably the fact that the title of prince is not hereditary. By the edicts, a Lhazaar noble holds his post through the power of his fleet and ability to command. Should he slip on either count, a more capable leader can lay claim to his title and his lands. Over the centuries, a number of principalities have adapted this custom to their own traditions; the gnomes of Lorghalen allow would-be princes to challenge a ruler to games of wit and tests of strategy, while the Farlnen elves expect a prince to possess arcane skill in addition to naval power.

The Lhazaar princes have always been willful and independent, and the history of the region is filled with feuds between princes. Powerful alliances have risen and fallen, but the islands have never been fully united under one prince. There has always been at least one lord who has claimed the title of high prince. This claim usually reflects the power of the lord's fleet, and as a result the high prince usually has the respect of the other princes -- but this doesn't make his word law. He can make requests of the other princes, but unless he intends to use force, he cannot make demands.

In the present day, the high prince is Rygar ir'Wynarn, the lord of Greentarn. A clever diplomat and brilliant captain, Rygar has earned the loyalty of a host of warriors and the respect of most of the princes; those who oppose him do so quietly. Rygar called together the delegation that represented the Principalities in the Treaty of Thronehold, and he hopes to one day rule as the true king of the seas.

**The Law of the Isles**

Few laws bind all citizens of the Principalities. Despite the long history of the isles, the Lhazaar Principalities have never subscribed to a comprehensive system of laws on par with the Code of Galifar. According to Lhazaar's edicts, temporal power rests in the hands of the prince: Each lord has the right to administer justice in his domain, appointing officers as he sees fit. As a result, customs vary significantly from principality to principality. High Prince Rygar goes to great pains to maintain order in Regalport, creating a safe environment for foreign emissaries and traders. But Port Krez in Krag is a wild and dangerous place for outsiders, where street justice is the common answer to social transgressions.

The Lhazaarites are an independent folk: They serve the prince at sea, but they don't want to be ordered about on land. Most Lhazaarites have little interest in the laws of other nations. A Lhazaar proverb states "no man owns the sea," and it's this indifference that fuels the tradition of piracy; a Lhazaar captain believes that he deserves whatever he can take, and whether he acts under the legitimacy of a letter of marque is a matter of convenience. The growing naval power of Galifar forced the Lhazaarites to limit their larcenous actions, but this was a matter of pragmatism as opposed to principle: With the Five Nations weakened by war, many Lhazaar captains have returned to the ways of their forefathers. This attitude often causes trouble for Lhazaarites traveling in other lands, since few feel bound by the laws of foreign kings. Despite these chaotic tendencies, most Lhazaarites are fiercely loyal to family, friends, and other members of their own principality. If one sailor kills another in a brawl, the matter might be completely ignored. But if a foreigner kills a Lhazaarite, the entire community may rise up in outrage. Ties between the Principalities are tenuous, with alliances and feuds changing with the winds. But the princes still unite to defend a prince against an outsider. It is this loyalty that serves as a shield for raiders like Prince Mika's Cloudbreakers; if one of the Five Nations actually sent a fleet into the Principalities, they would soon face an alliance of princes.

While the reins of power can shift as swiftly as the tides, much of the social hierarchy of Lhazaar society operates independently of the prince. While the prince has the power to appoint or dismiss ministers and sheriffs, it is rare for a prince to clear house in this manner; these landbound officials are in many ways a separate class, and this continuity is what allows life to continue smoothly through the frequent transitions.

## Customs of the Lhazaar Principalities

The water is a way of life for the people of the Principalities. Lhazaar children learn to fish and harvest the bounty of the sea as soon as they are old enough to handle a net, and most are equally at home on the deck of a ship or swimming through the waves. Most Lhazaarites prefer to stay close to the water: the ocean is freedom, and a Lhazaarite deep inland feels isolated and trapped. Lhazaarites prefer fish and salty foods to red meat, and Lhazaar captains traditionally drink salasta, a strong, clear alcoholic beverage made using salas seaweed.

The ancestors of the Lhazaarites came from many different races and nations. There is a wide range of skin and hair color among the humans; the original settlers came from across Sarlona, from desert, jungle, and plains. As a result, Lhazaarites tend to be comfortable with all races, and their culture and language incorporates traces of many others; while a dwarf born in the Lhazaar Principalities may not be able to speak Elven, he may use Elven swear words or interjections in his speech. Many of the humans of the western Principalities learn Riedran, which is fundamentally the language of Old Sarlona -- though a Lhazaar accent is quite different from that of an Inspired lord. The people of Orgalos have kept Riedran as their primary language and consider Common to be the language of Galifar; over the course of the last century the princes of Orgalos have formed strong ties with the Inspired, and much of the local Riedran trade passes through Piritar.

Lhazaar dress varies from principality to principality, but it often shows traces of the polyglot heritage of the region. Clothing tends to be tough and functional since it's made to resist the rough weather of the seas and the

bitter cold of the northern winter. Lhazaarites take great pride in their hair, and complex braids and decorative accessories are common among both men and women.

## Feats

You can include the following feats in your game; a player should work with her DM to ensure that these feats are appropriate for the DM's personal campaign.

### Expert Swimmer

You swim like a fish. You can stay underwater far longer than others of your race, and you are at home in the water.

**Prerequisite:** Swim 4 ranks, Endurance.

**Benefit:** You can hold your breath for 3 rounds per point of Constitution. You gain a +4 bonus on Constitution checks made to continue holding your breath. On a successful Swim check, you swim your land speed (as a full-round action) or half your land speed (as a move action).

Your natural swim speed is increased by 10 feet, if you have a swim speed.

**Normal:** You can hold your breath for a number of rounds equal to twice your Constitution before you are at risk of drowning. On a successful Swim check, you swim half your land speed as a full-round action, or one-quarter your land speed as a move action.

### Old Salt

You are an old hand at shipboard life, having mastered the myriad skills that are required of the experienced sailor. Additionally, you have an eye for the weather.

**Prerequisites:** Profession (sailor) 5 ranks.

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 bonus on Balance, Profession (sailor), and Use Rope checks.

Additionally, you may use a Profession (sailor) check to predict the weather (as described under the Survival skill on page 83 in the *Player's Handbook*).

**Normal:** Survival is normally used to predict the weather.

### Ship's Mage

You form a potent supernatural bond with a ship. Your spells have a more potent effect when cast aboard this ship. Spellcasters who possess this feat are greatly favored as ship crew.

**Prerequisites:** Profession (sailor) 2 ranks, Spellcraft 4 ranks.

**Benefit:** Add +1 to the caster level of all spells cast while you are aboard a ship that is familiar to you. In addition, spells you cast while aboard a ship that is familiar to you deal no damage to that ship.

It takes one week of living and working aboard a ship to become familiar with it. You may be familiar with only one ship at a time; the familiarity with a particular ship fades should you become familiar with another ship.

Additionally, should you remain away from the ship you are familiar with for more than a month, that familiarity fades as well.

**Next:** Take a look at a few of the powerful and infamous principalities!

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## About the Author

**Keith Baker** has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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